

Asian Arts & Culture Program Series



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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WHAT: Sakura Matsuri: A Festival of Japanese Arts

WHEN: Friday, April 18 at 8:00 PM

WHERE: Bowker Auditorium, UMass, Amherst

TICKETS: Call Fine Arts Center Box Office 1-800-999-UMAS or 413-545-2511

“Traditional and Contemporary Japanese Performing Arts in Bloom at UMass”

On Friday, April 18 at 8 PM the performance, **Furoshiki: Interpretations of treasured ceremonies** will be staged at Bowker Auditorium to herald the coming of spring by the Asian Arts & Culture Program at the University of Massachusetts. Two sets of internationally known Japanese artists –Kitanodai Gagaku Ensemble and master musician Masayo Ishigure will present the beauty and poignancy of Japanese arts and culture for audiences in western Massachusetts. **Furoshiki** is a new concept of a theatrical presentation that combines movement, word and images to present a series of visual and arresting scenes that introduce the audience to age-old Japanese rituals and traditions. Using the formality of traditional ceremonies, this performance will unfold like turning the pages of a picture book where each ritual will be highlighted scene by scene.

The **Kitanodai Gagaku Ensemble** artists from the Chiba Prefecture in Japan will open the evening performance with two stately dances: **Urayasu-no-Mai** and **Ryo-o** in the Bugaku style by male and female dancers dressed in gorgeous kimonos performing to **Gagaku** court music. This is followed by scenes of contemplative wonder and beauty

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seen in the high art of **Ikebana** (flower) design, the elegance of **Kana** and **Kanji** characters in calligraphy, rarely heard recitations of **Waka** poetry and the quiet meditative quality of **Chanoyu** (tea ceremony). A stunning light design by Japanese designer Masakazu Takahashi creates an inspiring setting for the formal ceremonies taking the audience on a journey to Japan. This unique presentation introduces new viewers to the traditional rituals of Japanese life, while making Japanese aficionados long for the familiar. The internationally renowned **Kitanodai Gagaku Ensemble** artists have performed in many venues around the world including India, Australia, France, Belgium, Luxembourg and other European cities. In their homeland, the **Kitanodai Gagaku Ensemble** regularly performs and teaches, thereby sharing their art with the new generation of young ones.

Following this “treat for the eyes”, the second half of the show will be a “treat for the ears” featuring virtuosic musician, **Masayo Ishigure**, on the koto. A young prodigy, Ms. Ishigure began playing the koto and jiuta shamisen at the age of five in Gifu, Japan. In 1986, she became a student at the Sawai Koto Academy of Music. The Sawai Koto Academy broke with traditional schools focusing a new light on koto music by incorporating everything from Bach to jazz. The koto changed from being a traditional Japanese instrument to an instrument of universal expressiveness.

In 1988, the same year she received a degree in Japanese Traditional Music at Takasaki Junior Arts College with a concentration on koto and shamisen, Ms. Ishigure was recorded on the CD entitled "The World of Tadao Sawai". Her first solo CD, "Grace", was released in 2001. A native of New York City since 1992, Ms. Ishigure has performed at Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, BAM, Merkin Hall, Trinity Church and other venues in the metropolitan area. She has been well received at many prestigious universities and colleges. A veteran of international music festivals, Ms. Ishigure's US appearances include the World Music Institute, Japan Society, Music from Japan series and Bang on a Can Festival. Ranked among the best in music circles both in Japan and America, she has performed with Yo-Yo Ma, Itzak Perlman, and John Williams. Don't miss this chance to celebrate the coming of spring and to acquaint or immerse yourself in the beauty of Japanese culture!

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Multiple outreach activities are being presented as a part of this celebration of Japan festival. Please check the calendar on our website: www.umass.edu/fac/asian.

Sakura Matsuri: A Festival of Japanese Arts will be presented at 8PM in Bowker Auditorium located in Stockbridge Hall across from the Campus Center Parking Garage. A special \$1 parking rate in the Campus Garage will be available for show patrons. Information about the Asian Arts and Culture Program events: www.umass.edu/fac/asian or call the AACCP office: (413) 577-2486. Downloadable high resolution photos for performance events are available at: <http://www.umass.edu/fac/asian/press.html>

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Calendar Editor:

Performance

Sakura Matsuri: A Festival of Japanese Arts. April 18, 2008, 8:00 PM Bowker Auditorium, UMass, Amherst. Reserved seating: \$20, 15; Five College students: \$10, 7; Youth 17 & under: \$12. For tickets call: 1-800-999-UMAS or 545-2511. Online at: www.fineartscenter.com. Information: Asian Arts & Culture Program (413) 577-2486